

BUTTERFLIES AND BURNET MOTHS FROM
MILOS ISLAND, GREECE, END MAY 1984

By JOHN G. COUTSIS*

Milos, an island of volcanic origin, is situated in the Aegean Sea, at a latitude of approximately 36 degrees north and is the westernmost of the Cyclades islands. It has an area of about 161 square kilometres and its highest peak reaches an altitude of 772 metres. The island's vegetation consists mainly of garrigue, which tends towards maquis in certain restricted areas. Cultivations are carried out mostly in wind-protected valleys.

The main purpose of my visit to this island was to investigate the possible existence there of *Pyrgus melotis* Duponchel 1832, which was described from specimens that were reputedly collected on Milos; a fact that has been doubted by most subsequent writers. Despite thorough collecting at all altitudes and in most of the island's accessible localities, I found no evidence of the existence of *melotis*. It is hoped to resume the search at the end of April and beginning of May, 1985, in order to check upon the possibility of its being on the wing earlier in the year.

In the course of my search for *melotis*, the following other species were recorded:

Papilionidae

Papilio machaon Linnaeus. A single larva observed feeding on parsnip in the town of Langadha.

Iphiclides podalirius Linnaeus. Two specimens observed at Plakota, in the vicinity of orchard trees.

Pieridae

Pieris brassicae Linnaeus. A few recorded in Langadha as adults and a great more as pupae.

Pontia daplidice Linnaeus. A small number recorded from Paraporos.

Euchloe ausonia Hübner. Quite common and generally distributed in fields and waste places. All specimens of the so called 2nd brood.

Colias crocea Fourcroy. Generally distributed and rather numerous.

Gonepteryx cleopatra Linnaeus. In fair numbers in Rivari, Plakota, Mamas and Mikro Vouno. Four females belonging to the whitish upperside morph and one tending toward the yellowish upperside morph.

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Satyridae

Hipparchia aristaeus Bonelli. Identity confirmed by the genitalia. Generally distributed and not uncommon. Specimens relatively large and brightly coloured.

Maniola jurtina Linnaeus. Generally distributed and common. Identity confirmed by genitalia. Males, quite often, with traces of orange-brown patches on FW upperside; females profusely shot with orange-brown suffusion on all wings upperside, somewhat reminiscent of subspecies *hispulla* Esper. This character is also shared by populations on Siphnos and Paros islands.

Lasiommata megera Linnaeus. A single female captured in Rivari.

Nymphalidae

Vanessa cardui Linnaeus. Generally distributed and common.

Vanessa atalanta Linnaeus. A few observed in Parasporos.

Lycaenidae

Callophrys rubi Linnaeus. A single male captured at about 600 metres altitude on Mt. Mikro Vouno.

Lycaena phlaeas Linnaeus. Quite common on Mt. Mikro Vouno.

Glaucopsyche alexis Rottemburg. A few males and females still on the wing at places with bushes of *Calicotome villosa* Poiret, presumably one of its larval foodplants. Recorded from Mikro Vouno, Rivari and Aghia Marina. The Milos population appears to be superficially similar to that of the islands of Paros and Siphnos. Females entirely black-brown on upperside and lacking blue basal dusting.

Pseudophilotes vicrama Moore. A few recorded from Aghia Marina, Mamas, Rivari, Plakota and Mikro Vouno.

Hesperiidae

Thymelicus acteon Rottemburg. Quite common. Recorded from Rivari, Aghia Marina, Mamas, Plakota and Mikro Vouno. Appears similar to nominate subspecies.

Zygaenidae

Zygaena punctum Ochsenheimer. In fair numbers in Parasporos and Aghia Marina.

Zygaena carniolica Scopoli. A thriving colony in Aghia Marina and occasional specimens in Parasporos. White rings surrounding red spots of FW upperside either absent or reduced. Abdominal red band in males either absent, or faint and narrow.

The Spring butterfly fauna of Milos appears to be quite similar to that of other islands in this area, such as Paros and Siphnos. It is characterized by the paucity of its species and by the lack of definable endemic subspecies. The poor vegetation of the island, as well as its small land mass and adverse weather conditions, no doubt play an important part on the island's restricted faunal composition.

References

- Coutsis, J. G., 1978. Spring Butterflies on the Greek island of Sifnos. *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* **90**: 300-301.
Coutsis, J. G., 1981. Spring Butterflies on the Greek islands of Paros and Sifnos. *Entomologist's Rec. J. Var.* **93**: 154-156.
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LARGE TORTOISESHELL, *NYMPHALIS POLYCHLOROS* (LINNAEUS) IN 1985 — It may be worth placing on record the recent observation by my friend Nick Mallet of a single female large tortoiseshell butterfly at a bramble flower in Wanstead Park, South Essex, [London], on 14th July 1985.

The origin of this particular insect is open to question. Certainly I have seen no others here in the last ten years which rules out a remnant breeding colony! One is left therefore with two choices: either a genuine migrant or an escape/introduction. Contact with the local butterfly breeding fraternity seems to rule out the latter choice, (although one can never be one hundred percent certain). COLIN W. PLANT, Passmore Edwards Museum, Romford Road, Stratford, London, E15 4LZ.

EREBIA EURYALE ESP. AND THE CAMERA. — The reaction of Lepidoptera to particular sounds does not appear to be often described. I had a striking example in the Swiss Alps on July 28 1985, while photographing in sunshine an assembly of about twenty *E. euryale*, all males, which appeared to be absorbing some mineral substance from a dried up puddle in a rough road. Human conversation nearby did not seem to upset them, and I was able to approach cautiously to within about six feet of them without causing disturbance. But the effect of the click when my Minolta camera was operated was dramatic: the butterflies without exception rose simultaneously into the air and flew around locally. This was repeated later under the same stimulus by another assembly a few yards away. After about fifteen minutes, however, both had reformed in similar numbers. — R. F. BRETHERTON, Folly Hill, Birtley Green, Bramley, Guildford, Surrey GU5 0LE.